

VZCZCXRO2681  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
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FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3544  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0403  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0071  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0375  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0484  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0365  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0060

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000496

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2016

TAGS: PREL ETRD PTER BX

SUBJECT: BRUNEI: WAIT AND SEE ON EAS, PREFERENCES APEC

REF: CANBERRA 1461

Classified By: DCM Justin Friedman, reasons 1.5 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister II Lim Jock Seng, in a wide-ranging conversation with Ambassador and DCM (septels) on September 21, told us that Brunei had very limited expectations for the East Asia Summit (EAS). Lim said that in shaping the EAS agenda, China was deferring to ASEAN to take the lead. ASEAN, for its part -- both collectively and among individual members -- did not have its act together to drive this initiative. He added that this left the field open for Australia and New Zealand to shape the EAS agenda. Brunei has adopted a "wait and see" approach to EAS, hoping for something useful to come out of it, but approaching the upcoming events with low expectations.

¶2. (C) On regional groupings more broadly, Lim said that the GoB finds APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) the most useful and effective among the plethora of regional groupings. Lim confirmed that the Sultan planned to attend this year's Leaders' Meeting, observing that the Sultan values and enjoys them more than any other regional gathering. Lim continued that Brunei welcomes the inclusion of counterterrorism issues on the APEC agenda as well as in the ARF.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Lim's remarks about Australia's and New Zealand's potential influence on the EAS agenda are particularly interesting in light of Embassy Canberra's comment in reftel that the Australians have taken a deliberately passive stance in the EAS to date. END COMMENT.

SKODON